

25 January 2001

Up to 200,000 Former Forced Laborers May Seek German Payments
(IOM press release on German forced labor compensation fund)

The International Organization for Migration (IOM), which is helping identify former Nazi-era slave and forced laborers who are eligible for compensation payments from a German foundation, says the number of claimants may be more than double the original estimates.

"It is quite clear that we will by far exceed the initial estimate of 75,000 claimants and we are now counting with up to 200,000 claimants," IOM Director General Brunson McKinley told German officials in Berlin January 24.

Compensation payments will be made through "Remembrance, Responsibility and Future," a foundation funded by the German government and German companies. IOM, which is one of seven partner organizations that will process claims for payment, has been conducting a worldwide outreach program to inform potential claimants.

The deadline for applications is August 11, 2001. The Web site for additional information and claim forms is www.compensation-for-forced-labour.org.

Following is the text of the IOM press release:

(begin text)

International Organization for Migration Geneva 24 January 2001

UP TO 200,000 FORMER FORCED LABOURERS EXPECTED TO CLAIM COMPENSATION WITH IOM

-- IOM Director General Urges Rapid Clarification of Eligibility for Western
European Forced Labourers

BERLIN, 24 January 2001 - In a statement delivered to the Kuratorium of the German "Remembrance, Responsibility and Future" Foundation, the Director General of the International Organization for Migration (IOM), Brunson McKinley, stressed that IOM's global outreach campaign and the cooperation with victims' associations worldwide has so far produced names and addresses of more than 160,000 potential claimants. "It is quite clear that we will by far exceed the initial estimate of 75,000 claimants and we are now counting with up to 200,000 claimants," McKinley underlined. He added that it was a "unique task" for IOM to define from scratch the potential claim population in the "rest of the world" (for which the IOM is responsible) and then process and pay those claims.

During the meeting, the Director General urged the Kuratorium of the Foundation to clarify the particularly pressing issue of the Western European forced labourers. According to the Foundation Act, forced labourers from Western European countries who were deported to Germany must have suffered from "extremely harsh living

conditions". "But," McKinley pointed out, "we are still lacking criteria to determine whether or not such conditions existed for a particular claimant." As an example, McKinley quoted the case of the IMIs, the Internati Militari Italiani. The clarification of this and other related questions will have a huge impact on the number of eligible claimants who might file a claim with IOM.

The Director General stressed that IOM, in the course of a broad international public information and media campaign begun last year, has disseminated information material including brochures, posters and leaflets in 23 languages and is already sending IOM forced labour claim forms together with the respective guidelines in 19 languages to all known claimants. The general information and the claim form can also be downloaded from the IOM/GFLCP Website www.compensation-for-forced-labour.org.

To speed up registration and the processing of the claims, IOM has installed a computerised registration system and has trained its mission staff worldwide in claimants' assistance and the intake of claims. Helplines can be contacted at IOM missions in countries with a large expected number of claims.

German Forced Labour Compensation Program - IOM

In an effort to further improve transparency and efficiency of the programme, McKinley pointed out that IOM has proactively pursued a close cooperation with victims' associations, partner organizations, and other interested parties and has signed a series of cooperation agreements in the field. IOM has also taken the initiative and established an International Steering Group of the most involved victims' associations that have met on 8 January at IOM Headquarters in Geneva for the first time. The response has been very positive and the meeting resulted in unique information-sharing, confidence-building and trust as well as in concrete action-oriented cooperation. Partner organizations' assistance could be particularly helpful with regard to property loss. In this area, IOM is globally responsible for all claims and has developed a separate claim form for the purpose.

Concluding, the Director General mentioned that thanks to IOM's experience and its positive role within the implementation of the German Forced Labour Compensation Programme, the Organization has also been entrusted with the coverage of certain classes of claimants included in the Holocaust Victim Assets Litigation set up by the Swiss Banks. "The overlap in the information efforts and the synergy brought about by the processing of the claims through one organisation only will free funds for compensation purposes. And this will be in favour of the people who are waiting for compensation," McKinley emphasized.

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(end text)

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